



Center for Special Studies  
Intelligence and Terrorism Information

## News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

August 1-16, 2006

### Contents

Overview

Important  
Events

Statistical Data

Internal  
Palestinian  
Arena



A Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades Palestinian terrorist holding a poster of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah during a demonstration in Nablus (Photo: 'Abed Omar Qusini for Reuters, August 11). Hezbollah-directed Fatah infrastructures are active in Nablus and attempted to carry out suicide bombing attacks in Israel during the war.



Palestinian youths looking at house in Jenin attacked by Israeli Air Force (Photo: 'Abed Omar Qusini for Reuters, August 11). Two senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives responsible for most of the suicide bombing attacks in Israel during 2005 and planned for 2006 were killed there.

### Overview

- The general Palestinian public and the terrorist organizations were conspicuous in their support for Hezbollah and admiration for its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. However, the Palestinians have complained of the “forgotten war” in the Gaza Strip (where Operation Summer Rains continues) and expanded the internal discussion regarding how what they considered Hezbollah’s achievements could be adopted by the Palestinian Authority (one of the conclusions: advanced rockets, which Hezbollah used extensively against Israel, are important).
- During the war the terrorist organizations made efforts – some of them directed and encouraged by Hezbollah – to carry out **suicide bombing attacks and abductions** to open another front against Israel. During the war the Israeli security forces foiled nine such attempts, all of them **on the verge of being carried out**, and more than 20 attacks in various stages of preparation.
- During the first stages of the war the terrorist organizations increased Qassam rocket fire attacks on populated areas of the western Negev. However, as the war progressed the number of attacks decreased, partially because of the lack of Israeli and international attention. The 122 mm rocket launched at the Ashqelon marina on the first day of the ceasefire in Lebanon might be a sign that rocket fire from the Gaza Strip will resume.

## Important Events

### The Gaza Strip: Operation Summer Rains continues

- The Israeli Air Force continued attacking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, especially weapons and machine shops. At the same time, artillery fire continued to be directed at Qassam rocket launching sites.
- The Air Force bombed a Popular Resistance Committees training camp on August 9, killing three Palestinians: a terrorist-operative and two civilians. On August 12 the Air Force attacked a group of armed Palestinians in the ruins of Kfar Darom. Five of them were killed and six wounded.
- On August 10, during an action near the Dahania airport, the IDF exposed and destroyed a tunnel 180 meters long between Egypt and the Gaza Strip which had been used to smuggle weapons.

### Significant reduction in Qassam rocket fire

- On August 14 a 122 mm Grad rocket (with a maximum range of 20.4 km, or about 12.6 miles) hit the Ashqelon marina. It was the northernmost site hit by a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip. The IDF attacked the squad of three terrorists who launched the rocket. The **Palestinian Islamic Jihad** (PIJ) claimed responsibility for the attack and promised to continue shelling Israel.
- During the first half of August there was a **significant decrease** in the number of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip at population centers in the western Negev. **Twenty-four hits were identified in Israeli territory** as compared with **191 in July** (the record month since the disengagement last August) and **140 in June**. It should be noted that most of the rockets were fired at the beginning of the war in Lebanon (19 hits on July 14), but since the beginning of August there has been a significant reduction (See Statistical Data).

- “Palestinian security sources” told a Haaretz reporter that there were **a number of reasons for the decrease in the number of rockets**: the intensive IDF activity in the Gaza Strip; the pressure exerted by the civilian population (which is showing signs of being tired of the continued confrontation); the cessation of Hamas rocket fire following an appeal by Palestinian prime minister Ismail Haniya, prompted by Hamas higher-echelon recognition that the international community was not paying attention to the Gaza Strip but rather to the war in Lebanon.<sup>1</sup>
- In our assessment, the ceasefire in Lebanon is liable to refocus attention on the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and may lead to a renewed increase in rocket fire.

## **Judea and Samaria**

### **Jenin**

- On August 9 the Air Force attacked a house in the refugee camp in Jenin, killing two senior PIJ terrorists hiding there. The two, Muhammad ‘Atiq and Amjad ‘Ajami, senior organization operatives in northern Samaria, were responsible for most of the suicide bombing attacks carried out against Israel during 2005 and planned for 2006. Those included the attacks at the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya in July and December 2005, the attack in the market in Hadera in October 2005 and the attack at the Stage Club in Tel Aviv in February 2005.
- Both terrorists had experience in preparing explosive devices and locating potential suicide bombers. Before they were killed they were actively planning to carry out a suicide bombing attack within Israel. They were in contact with PIJ headquarters in Syria and Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon who pressured them to carry out the attack (IDF Spokesman’s Website, August 10).

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<sup>1</sup> Avi Issacharoff, Haaretz Website, August 13.

## **East Jerusalem**

- On August 10 an Italian tourist was stabbed to death near the Flower Gate in Jerusalem. The attacker fled from the scene and his identity is unknown.

## **Suicide bombing attack foiled in the Nablus area**

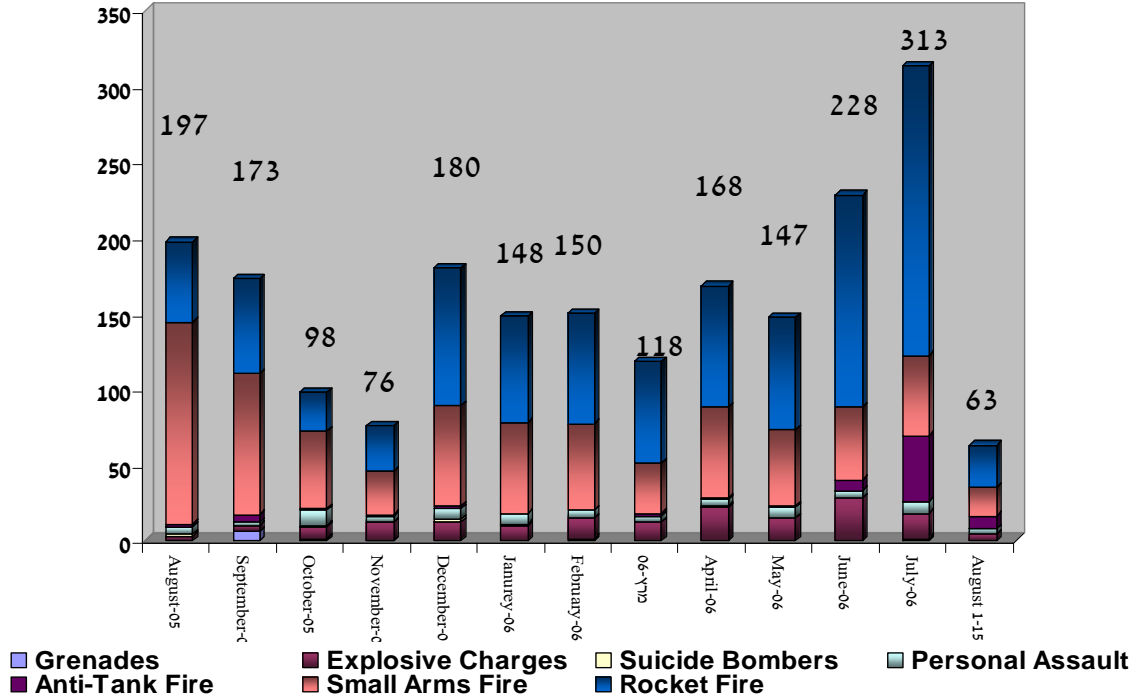
- On August 5 a suicide bombing attack at the settlement of Alon Moreh, which was supposed to be carried out by the Fatah/Tanzim infrastructure in Nablus, was foiled. Israeli security forces arrested the suicide bomber, who was wearing an explosive belt. Before he left on his mission, pictures were taken showing him armed and wearing an explosive belt, reading his “will” and taking responsibility for the attack.
- On August 9 two women were arrested, a suicide bomber and her companion, who was supposed to help her carry out a suicide bombing attack at the IDF roadblock at Beit Iba near Nablus. The two had been dispatched by the Fatah/Tanzim infrastructure in Nablus.
- The two foiled suicide bombing attacks represent a small part of the terrorist organizations’ efforts to carry out suicide bombing attacks and abductions during the war in Lebanon to open a third front against Israel. The activities of some of the terrorist infrastructures, particularly those around Nablus, were directed by Hezbollah, which during the war transmitted instruction to increase terrorist attacks, including suicide bombing attacks.<sup>2</sup>

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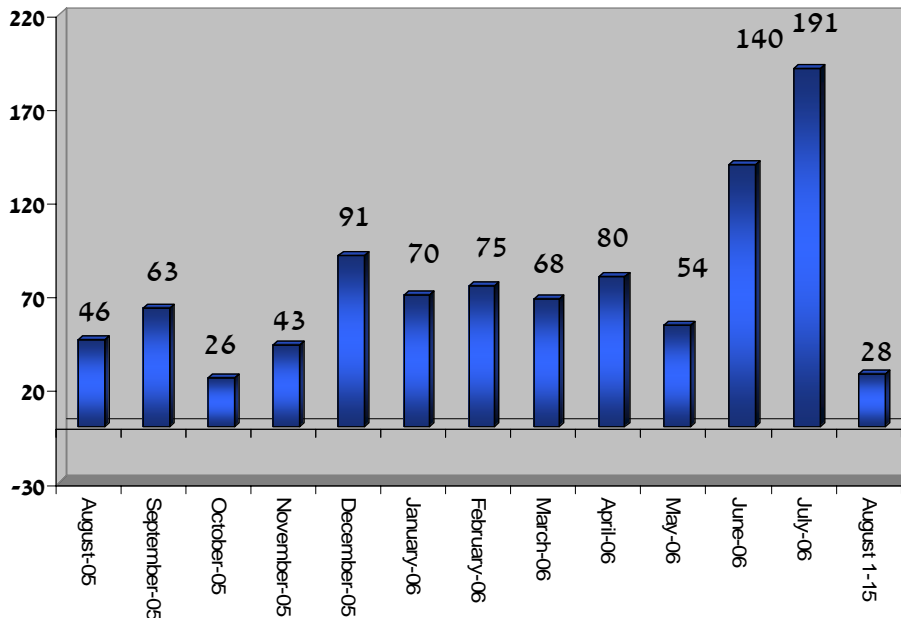
<sup>2</sup> An Information Bulletin on the subject will shortly be available on our Website in English.

## Statistical Data (since the disengagement)

### Monthly distribution of attacks

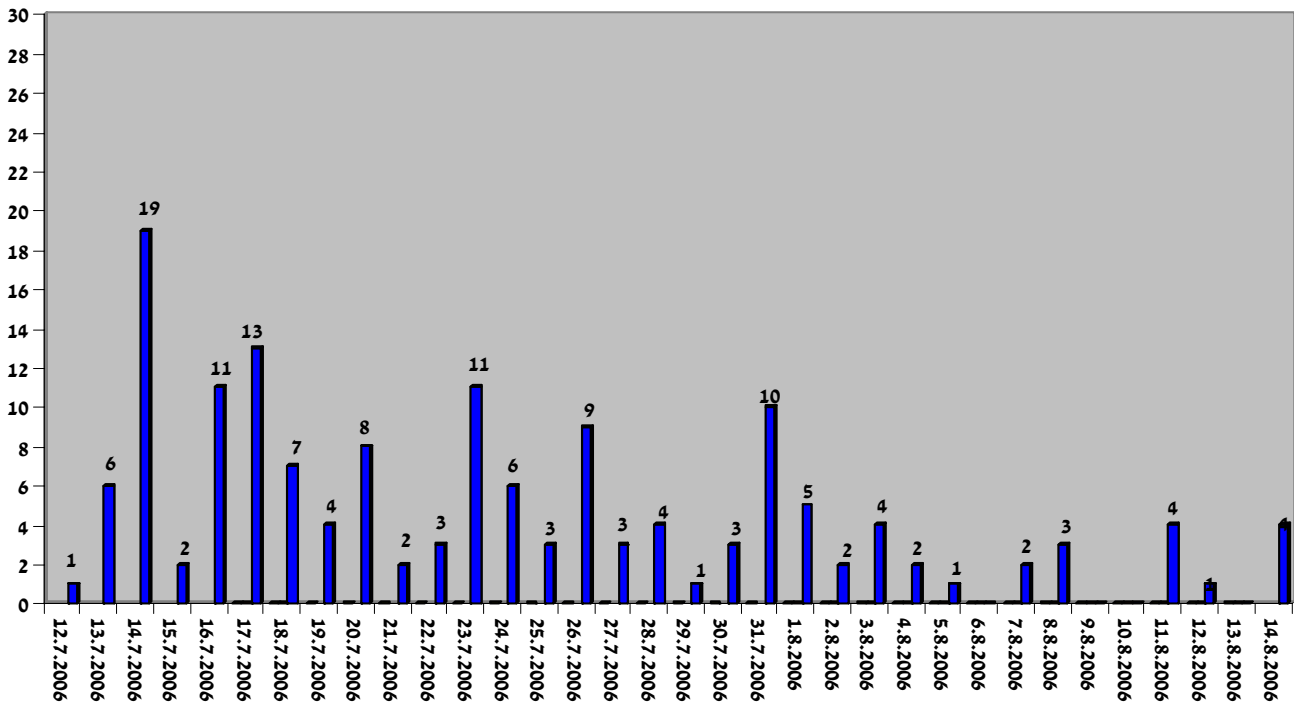


### Monthly distribution of Qassam rockets and occasional mortar shells<sup>3</sup>

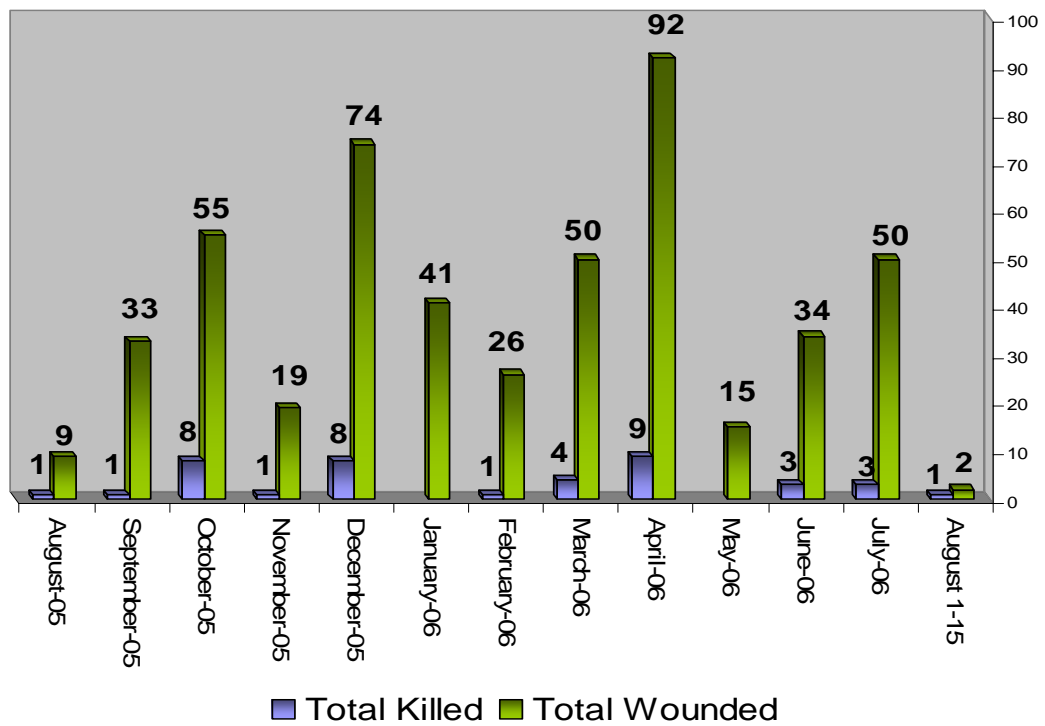


<sup>3</sup> These data relate only to identified hits and not to the total number of rockets fired. That number is, in our assessment, 20%-30% larger.

## Daily distribution of Qassam rockets during the war in Lebanon



## Monthly distribution of Israeli casualties



## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### Continuing shows of identification with Hezbollah

- The Palestinian public and terrorist organizations carefully followed the events in Lebanon, frequently expressing admiration for Hezbollah and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. There were mass rallies, the Hezbollah flag was raised, CDs containing songs of praise for Nasrallah were distributed and there were inflammatory sermons in the mosques: the Friday sermons (including in Al-Aqsa mosque) praised Hezbollah “struggle,” castigated Israel and the United State and criticized the western countries for their lack of action.
- At the same time, the Palestinians complained of the “forgotten war” in the Gaza Strip and expanded the internal discussion to how what they consider Hezbollah’s achievements could be adopted by the Palestinian Authority. One of their main conclusions was that rockets, including anti-tank missiles, were important in fighting against Israel. That is liable to increase the terrorist organizations’ motivation to acquire advanced rockets and to smuggle them into the Gaza Strip.<sup>4</sup>



**Pro-Hezbollah demonstrations in Nablus carrying yellow Hezbollah and green Hamas flags (Photos: Palestine-info.net, the Hamas Website, August 14).**

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<sup>4</sup> See the article by Avi Issacharoff, Haaretz, August 7.

## **Political and public conjectures regarding the possible dismantling of the Palestinian Authority**

- On August 5 the Israeli security forces arrested ‘Aziz Dweik, the Hamas speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council. The arrest was carried out following those of other Hamas activists, among them government ministers and other members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, since the abduction of Gilad Shalit, which led to Operation Summer Rains.
- Dweik’s arrest led to condemnations from Abu Mazen, Palestinian prime minister Ismail Haniya and senior Hamas members. As a result, the Palestinian Legislative Council met in extraordinary session on August 9, during which Ismail Haniya stated that they “had to discuss the future of the Palestinian Authority.” That was interpreted as a threat to dismantle the PA (Ma’an News Agency, August 9).
- Ismail Haniya’s remarks caused great consternation and led to widespread public and political discussion regarding the issue of dismantling the PA. Abu Mazen and senior Fatah members rejected the idea, and Abu Mazen is working to institute a unity government (whose establishment is being delayed because of disagreements as to its nature). Hamas speakers as well have made it clear that dissolving the PA is out of the question and that the movement views the existence of the PA as a “national necessity,” but so far rejects the establishment of a unity government.